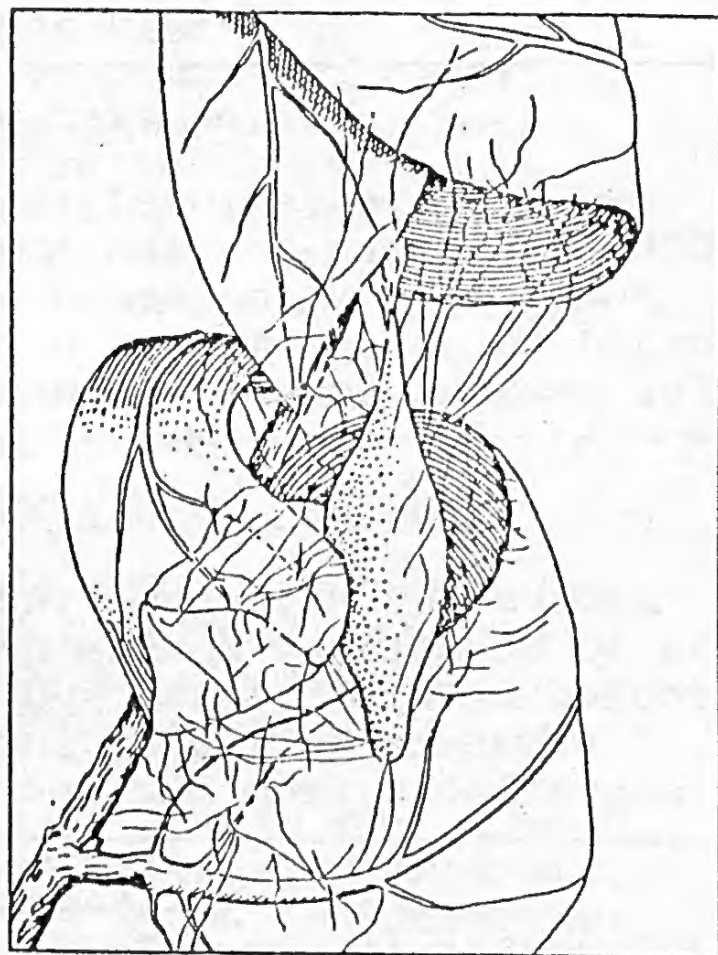
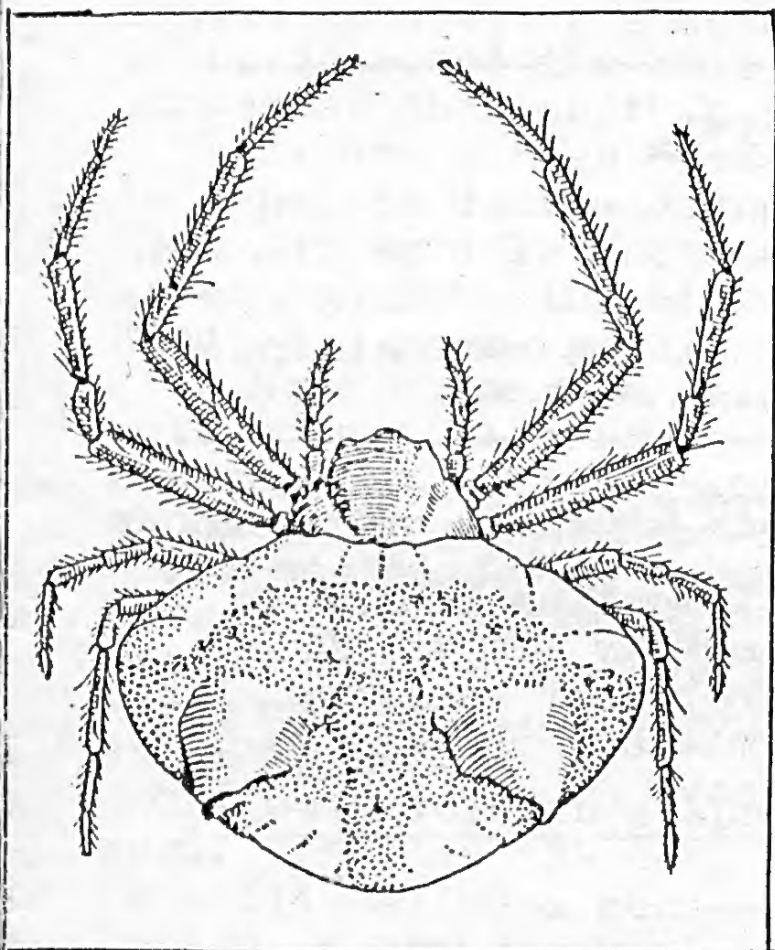


JANUARY 1985

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting 1st February: Miss W. Clark - "Spiders".
- Meeting 1st March: ANNUAL MEETING - Members' Night.
- Excursion 3rd February: Fire damage survey - Fells
Gully, Clunes area.
- Excursion 3rd March: To be arranged.



TWO SPINED SPIDER and EGG-SAC (Australian Museum Diagram).

President: Miss H Burgess 312210
Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670
Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631
Editors: Mr G Binns 323670
Mr J Fink 052 861210

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art
Building of the School of Mines and Industries,
Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.
EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM
CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS,
BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS.

REPORTS FROM DECEMBER MEETING

- D. Bennett - - Musk Lorikeets in Brown Hill area.
H. Burgess - - Koala in Moola St garden, last week of November.
F. Williamson News of Square-tailed Kite at Warrak.
M. Tonkin - - Koala in garden at Mt. Helen.
F. Harrap - - On recent excursion to Maryborough:
Male Gilbert Whistler, Owlet
Nightjar, Male Sparrowhawk with a much larger female, Black Shouldered Kite, Western Warbler (Gerygone) heard.
A search for indicators of Wombats in the Wombat Forest had proved fruitless.

ANNUAL MEETING.

Members are reminded that at the next meeting Office Bearers for the coming year will be Elected.

Nomination forms are available and members are urged to act promptly in organizing nominations for persons to act as committee members.

MOSSES and LIVERWORTS SEMINAR.

A five day Bryophyte identification course is to be held at Monash University, 20 to 24 May, including field trips and laboratory sessions.

A brochure outlining information, charges etc. is available from our secretary.

NOTICE.

A Typist is urgently needed for the coming year.

The Speaker at the meeting held on 7 December was Mr. E. Perkins a member of the Castlemaine F.N. Club.

Grasses are the most important plants on Earth. It is grass that supplies nearly all our food, whether we eat it as grain or as meat. The great civilisations were built on grass. The Western civilisation on Wheat, the Asian - Rice, and the American - Maize. In Australia we have a wide variety of grasses that provide seed and grazing.

However most of our grasses are inferior for hard grazing and so species like Rhye Grass, Phalaris, Cocksfoot, etc. have been sown.

A grass plant is formed of jointed stems with a single leaf growing at each joint or node. The leaves consist of sheath and blade, the sheath is wrapped around the hollow stem and can be either longer or shorter than the next joint or node.

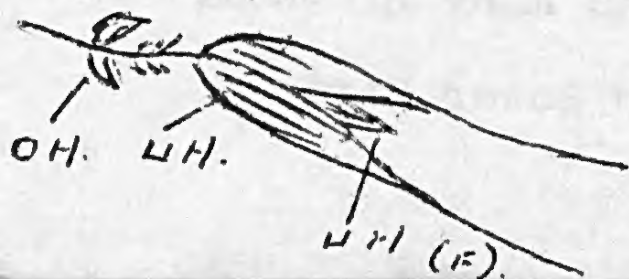
Stems are either slender as thick as the lead in a pencil, or less, or robust up to and thicker than the pencil, these are general terms as a grass on rich soil is more robust than the same kind on poor soil.

In some cases leaves are rough or scabrid

In some this roughness is pointed upwards, in others down. Annual grasses have fewer leafy shoots than perennials.

The seedheads are commonly made up of branches carrying the spikelets. In others the seedhead has no branches. Thus there is a loose head in Oats, a narrow head in Phalaris and a spike like head in Rhyegrass.

The spikelets in a seedhead contain the live seed. In some the seed is covered by a husk but is still called a seed. This is so in Speargrass, but in others the seedhead separates from the husk. Some seedheads have a number of husks, others only one pair....(husks are also called glumes).



OH outer husk or glume
UH upper or inner husk
UH (F) upper husk in which
a seed develops (fertile 3
floret)

cont..

Grasses make an interesting study. Some of our most beautiful grasses, such as Speargrass, grow in bushland or along roads. There is a wide range of Books and other literature for the person who wants to study Grasses.

Our thanks to Ern Perkins who came down from Castlemaine and treated us to a most informative illustrated session.

FOR THE DIARY

The Timboon F.N.C. is hosting the next 'camp out' of the Western Victorian F.N.C.A. and has arranged for the venue to be at Kangarooobie, Princetown.

This is an excellant live-in venue, central to the Otways and southern coastline.

Date: 19 - 21 April.

Cost \$30, complete accomodation for the weekend.

Footnote: We were pleased to welcome the recently elected President and Secretary/Treasurer of the association, Bob Humphries and Win McPhee, to our November meeting. Bob and Win are members of the Stawell club.

SOME BREEDING SUCCESSES IN SYDNEY

President Helen has provided some interesting news items from Sydney papers, collected during her recent holiday trip.

A report of some outstanding breeding successes at the Taronga Park Zoo contains some fascinating facts. A number of exotic animals that rarely breed in captivity have been bred at the Park.

These include the giant Aldabran Tortoise, Rhinoceros Iguanas from Central America, and the first nest building by Flamingoes! Although no eggs were recorded, this was a breakthrough as a way to encourage breeding.

The trick was to place mirrors in strategic locations around the birds pool. Flamingoes only breed in colonies, so the birds were fooled into believing there are twice as many of their number present!

Blue Winged Kookaburra and Satin Bower Bird breeding are other successes.

cont..

The highlight of the Australian collection is the thriving colony of Leadbeaters Possums. The Zoo has produced eight young to date.

Then in the Botanical Gardens in the heart of Sydney, another prolific breeding ground has been established. White Ibis have created a rookery of more than fifty birds on the date palms amid the high rise buildings, garden visitors and lunch time joggers. The chicks are thriving and the adult birds are taking food scraps and even scavenging garbage bins.

DECEMBER EXCURSION - Mt. COLE DEC 8

Under fine weather conditions, Frank Harrap led a party of appreciative members on two pleasing walks during our final club excursion for 1984.

The morning session was spent at the Glut, Tunbridge Track and Creek. The party moved in two groups to facilitate easier movement and to provide better observing conditions. In this area the tracks, high above the gully, are excellent vantage points for viewing any movement of wild life in the canopy of vegetation below. Significant sightings there were a pair of Rose Robins, and many satin fly catchers.

In the Afternoon, the Richards Camp precincts were explored and the hike to the waterfall enlivened by a constant concert of Whistler calls, male Golden Whistlers, in superb plumage, were particularly admired. An exciting interlude was created by a low soaring raptore with quite distinct markings - a Squaretailed Kite.

A number of fern species provided interesting observations for the botonists, in spite of the general dryness of the area.

G.W.B.

In 1854, the President of the U.S.A. made an offer to buy a large area of Indian land with the promise of a 'reservation' for the Indian people.

Chief Seattle's reply has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made. The lengthy statement commences:

"How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.....

If we do not own the freshness of the air and sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?"

In the concluding lines the Chief writes:

"This we know: The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it.

Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

A copy of Chief Seattle's reply can be made available to interested members. Ed.

AN INTERESTING FOSSIL.

In 1857, near Smeaton Victoria, a beautifully preserved piece of fossil dentary was found at 50 feet, when digging a well. This was eventually presented to the National Museum of Victoria.

On the basis of the fossil with two teeth a highly specialised carnivorous Daysurid was identified. This fossil resembles the living Tiger Quoll (*DASURUS maculatus*), but it also resembles the living Tasmanian Devil (*SARCHOPHILUS harrisii*).

It is generally regarded, more or less, as an intermediate between the two.

The age of the fossil is not known because the sediments in which it is found cannot now be examined.

The name given to this fossil mammal is *GLAUCODON ballaratensis*.

6 (Reviewed from the book *Prehistoric Animals of Aust.* by Peter Schouten.

The class Arachnida, includes Spiders, Harvestmen (daddy longlegs) Scorpions Ticks and mites and a few minor groups.

These few notes are about these creatures.

Scorpions belong to the group Scorpiones (Scorpionida). They are warmth loving coming out at night to hunt spiders and other insects, which they grip with their large pincers and sting to death with the tip of the tail.

Scorpions in Australia are not considered to be dangerous to man.

Harvestmen belong to the order Opilione (Phalangida) They are creatures with small bodies and usually very long legs, hence daddy longlegs.

They have no silk glands and feed mostly on other insects. The cephalothorax and abdomen are united.

The name Harvestman comes from harvest time, when these creatures are mostly seen.

Ticks are large members of the blood sucking mite like animals (Acarina) of the families Ixodidae and Argasidae.

They have a barbed proboscis which they bury in the skins of animals.

Ticks are parasitic and cause such things as mange in dogs and cattle and itch in man, Tick fever is one of the worlds scourges.

Half the known mites, however, are free living on land, in fresh water and even in the sea.

Mites are any of the small Arachnids (order Ascari) with sac like bodies, they are parasitic on plants and animals, others live in cheese, flour and unrefined sugar and other foodstuff.

Mites cause a great deal of damage to crops especially lucerne and clover.

No other class of animal is less loved than the Arachnids! However most people in towns and cities have not seen most of these and have not had one one single unpleasant experience.

Spiders, Harvestmen and Scorpions do more good than harm by killing and eating other unwanted insects.

SOME PLACES of SPECIAL INTEREST IN VICTORIA

The far East of Victoria, that corner of Victoria with a wide and contrasting area of interest.

Compare the windswept coastline between Cape Conlan Vic. to Green Cape in N.S.W. with the great eucalypt forests of the foothills, the jungle like forest around Mt Drummer, Cool mountains forests of the coastal range and southern tableland.

The Snowy river country, then further east to the sub alps.

In this area is a wealth of Victoria's rare animals, beautiful plants both highland and coastal, and many of our most interesting birds..

Leon Costerman listed this as an area of special interest

